

THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND SOVIET IMPERIALISM

Is It a New Menace or the Old Bear Reawakened?

PETER MEYER

ON JUNE 28, 1951, Secretary of State Dean Acheson, testifying before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, brought to the attention of the American public a question discussed up to then by only a few scholars and isolated groups of emigrés. The question was: are we fighting Russia, or are we fighting Soviet Communism? Does the aggressiveness of Russia's present rulers, with the resulting permanent crisis and threat of war, flow from the very same motives and interests that led the czars to try to expand in more or less the same directions as the Soviets; or is it impelled by an ideology and a system—Communism—international in its character and its aims? That is: do we face Communism dressed as Russian nationalism, or Russian nationalism dressed as Communism?

The political consequences of the answer decided on are enormous, as Secretary Acheson well knew, and as the *New York Times* emphasized at the time of his testimony: "Secretary Acheson pointed out that the Soviet rulers have followed the imperialist Russian tradition. . . . The development of the Duchy of Muscovy from a vassal and tribute collector of the Mongol Tartars to an empire which first enslaved the Russian people themselves . . . and then embarked on conquering other nations until it dominates half of Europe and an even larger part of Asia, is part of elementary history. Viewed

in the light of this history, there is a peculiar unreality attaching itself to the American policies which after the First World War opposed any 'dismemberment' of the Russian empire even by nations fighting for their freedom from its rule. . . . Mr. Acheson's statements show that these policies have been replaced by a new realism."

Russian emigré leaders in this country immediately rose to protest against this suggestion of dismemberment and challenged Mr. Acheson's view of Russian history: "The Bolshevik regime," a group of democratic Russian exiles wrote to the *Times* on July 8, "created an entirely new species of state. . . . Stalin is not an instrument in the hands of the Russian people actuated by 'imperialist tradition' but quite the reverse. . . ." Other emigrés, belonging to the minority nationalities of the Soviet Union, stood squarely behind Secretary Acheson's interpretation: "International Communism," wrote the Ukrainian leader Lev E. Dobriansky to the *Times* on July 9, "constitutes the mere ideological trappings of the modern Russian imperialist builders of the long-awaited 'Third Rome.' . . . The conspicuous Soviet traits of conquest, domination over foreign peoples, terrorism and national genocide [are] the chief ingredients of traditional Russian imperialism. . . ."

Obviously, the issue is a crucial one, affecting as it does the basic aims of American defense policy in the face of the Soviet challenge, as well as our policy toward the Russian and non-Russian peoples—Ukrainians, Georgians, Uzbeks, etc.—that inhabit the Soviet Union. (On the right to national independence of the satellite countries, of course, there is no dispute at all among anti-Communists.) It is clear that the fate of these peoples constitutes a long-range prob-

PETER MEYER is an authority on Russian and East European politics and history, and has written on this area for various periodicals. Here he analyzes the roots—economic, social, political, and ideological—of Soviet expansionism, with reference to our present policy of "containing" Communist aggression. Mr. Meyer's article "Tito's Threat to Stalin's Empire" appeared in the June 1950 COMMENTARY.

lem of great significance. It is equally clear, however, that our answer to the question—Is our enemy Russia or Communism?—is of great immediate importance. For the strategy and tactics of the West vis-à-vis the Kremlin must remain hesitant until we arrive at an answer; and it is all-important that it be a correct one. It seems that Secretary Acheson had found the answer to his own satisfaction: our enemy is indeed the same old Russian imperialism *redivivus*, and our policy should be to “contain” it. Since the familiar is always less frightening than the unfamiliar, it would be reassuring if he were right. But is he?

BOLSHEVIK policy has undergone a peculiar evolution since 1917, beginning at an extreme of internationalism and ending at the other extreme of a kind of patriotic xenophobia that regards “cosmopolitanism” as the blackest sin. Lenin would have ridiculed the claim that it was important to preserve and defend the Russian empire, or that Russia and Russian culture were superior to other nations and their cultures. During World War I, he insisted that the only genuine socialist program was that expressed in the slogan of “revolutionary defeatism”—only those who worked for the defeat of their own army and government were true socialists. And no one could be considered a socialist, he added, if he did not fight for the right of all national minorities to full self-determination, including secession.

After the Bolshevik seizure of power, understandably enough, this policy was changed: the Bolsheviks were now for the defense of their “proletarian state.” But they were not only for its defense in the geographic or strategic sense; their notion of defense included, when feasible, aggressive warfare to extend socialist rule to other countries. As Lenin had written in 1915: “The victorious proletariat of that country [in which the socialist revolution first takes place], having expropriated the capitalists and organized socialist production at home, will rise against the rest of the capitalist world, attracting the oppressed classes of

other countries, raising among them revolts against the capitalists, *launching, in case of necessity, armed forces against the exploiting classes and their states*” (my emphasis). This idea was invoked by the left Communists who opposed the treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany in 1918. Did we not always say, they argued, that we would conduct a revolutionary war against capitalist states when we came to power? Lenin agreed this would be most desirable, but he pointed out that it was impossible under the circumstances. The masses did not want to fight, the army had disintegrated. Was it not more reasonable to give the Germans what they demanded and preserve state power for a future comeback?

In this debate and in all Bolshevik discussion in these early years, the idea of “Russia” played no role at all. Both sides were arguing about what was better for “world revolution”: to risk a defeat in a glorious struggle against overwhelming odds while trying to arouse the international proletariat by a heroic example—or to preserve a bastion from which the world revolution would strike out in better times. It is significant that it was decided that some state power, even in Siberia, was preferable to a heroic example. And it is also significant that no one questioned the idea that aggressive war could be an important weapon of the revolution. When the Bolsheviks debated in 1920 whether the Red Army should pursue the defeated Poles beyond the Bug River, the issue was again a purely practical one: neither side disputed the morality of extending the revolution by arms—in effect, by aggressive, outright war. So when, later on, Social Democratic Georgia was overrun by the Bolsheviks, the Politburo was unanimous in approving the act, and Trotsky—who had opposed the invasion of Poland on practical grounds—wrote a book defending this later one.

The final outcome of the discussions of these early days was the decision that, though such aggressive tactics were in principle legitimate, it was inexpedient to adopt them under the circumstances of that time. Rather than risk the loss of Bolshevik control

over Russia by launching a revolutionary crusade into Europe, that control was to be consolidated so that Russia could serve as the base and fortress of world revolution. But the result of this decision was, in the end, that Russia was cut off increasingly from Western Europe and forced to develop along lines of her own. These lines were determined by the peculiar conditions of Russia as a historical entity, and—as the power struggles of the 20's decided—by Stalin.

THE notion of exporting Communism by force of arms seemed to have been decisively abandoned when Stalin attained exclusive power in the middle 20's on his program of "socialism in one country." Lenin had insisted that, since Russia was a backward country, the Communists could not retain power there for long unless reinforced by victorious proletarian revolutions in the advanced countries of the West. Stalin now claimed that, on the contrary, Russia *was* able to achieve socialism with its own resources. Hearing this, Western statesmen rejoiced and the Communist Left Opposition despaired. For both were convinced that socialism, understood as an economy of plenty, equality, and freedom, would fail in isolated, backward, impoverished Russia. What they did not realize was that Stalin's "socialism" would, by the end of the 20's, mean the centralized exploitation of society by a hierarchy of "administrators" wielding all economic and political power. And such a system, resting on an economy of scarcity instead of plenty, *could* be established inside one country, and especially a backward one.

How did this new system come into existence? Had Stalin, whatever his original intentions, become transformed, willy-nilly, into a successor of the czars, ruling not only in their place but in their manner, with their motives, and—ultimately—with their policies? In later years it began to look this way, and one should not underestimate the importance of the social and spiritual forces specific to Russia in the transformations that the Bolshevik regime underwent there. But actually it was not the unexpected resurgence of the

Slavic soul, but rather the presence of a very specific economic and social situation that led to the total liquidation of socialist hopes.

The Bolsheviks had seized power as a tiny even though highly disciplined and organized minority. The industrial working class in Russia was relatively small, uneducated, and inexperienced in politics. The peasant masses supported the Bolsheviks in the moment of revolution, but could not be relied on after that. This lack of broad social support, plus foreign and civil wars, demanded a thorough centralization of power if Bolshevik rule was to be maintained.

In order to hold on to power, the Bolsheviks sacrificed much of their pre-revolutionary program. Instead of workers' control in the factories, they gave absolute power to directors and managers appointed by the party; instead of equalizing incomes, they introduced high salaries and premiums, first for bourgeois specialists, but later for their own party officials too. The radical democratic program proclaimed by Lenin in *State and Revolution* in the summer of 1917 went overboard: instead of officials elected by, responsible to, and subject to recall by the voters, there were commissars with dictatorial powers, a one-party dictatorship, and terror directed against all opposition.

A centralized, state-owned, planned economy provided, in the absence of democratic checks and balances, a firmer basis for the absolute power of a privileged class than ever capitalism could. This was not an entirely new phenomenon: capitalism is something of an exception in history, and most of the privileged and ruling classes of the past have derived their power from the state, not from private property with the rights that cluster about and extend from it. This is especially true of Asiatic societies, which were ruled, literally for millennia, by despotic hierarchies. In Russia, where such traditions were strong, the evolution toward bureaucratic despotism was easier than it would have been in any other European country.

In the course of two decades, the Stalinist bureaucracy succeeded in completely liquidating the independent peasantry and totally

enslaving the urban working class. It became the undisputed master of the country and, having done that, was ready to enter the lists as a competitor for world power—if it got the opportunity. In the Second World War, this opportunity came.

BUT why are the new rulers of Russia not satisfied to stay at home and exploit the immense natural riches and endless reservoirs of manpower they now possess?

The answer is that they are driven to expansion by the inner conflicts of the new social system they have established. In every modern society there exists some method of regulating the distribution of the means of production and of labor power among the various branches of production. In the free-market countries, the law of supply and demand maintains, even at the cost of recurrent crises, some equilibrium. In Soviet society, this law was superseded by the universal monopoly of the rulers of the state. The distribution of labor and of the national product now depends on their planning. But rational planning and harmonizing of conflicting interests are impossible where free discussion, criticism, timely correction of mistakes by the pressure of public opinion, and democratic bargaining between social groups are outlawed. The omnipotent ruling group tends to sacrifice the various interests of the community to its own appetite for power, and to substitute wishful thinking for economic realities. Their plans, however unrealistic, *must* be fulfilled.

Not allowed to criticize or discuss the orders given them, Soviet managers and administrators are forced to cheat. This cheating undermines the reliability of all inventories and statistics. At a party conference in February 1941, Georgii Malenkov cited a typical example. Four different but simultaneous reports about the goods available in a factory were obtained from, respectively, the head of the supply department, the chief accountant, the plant director, and a committee of inspection: they differed by several hundred per cent. This is the stuff Soviet statistics are made of. They are kept secret, which makes

public control impossible, and the planners themselves obtain a grievously distorted picture of reality from them.

Mistakes in planning are inevitable, and as they cannot be criticized and corrected in time, they swell to colossal proportions. The annals of Soviet economy are full of stories about factories built in impossible locations, machines inoperative for lack of some parts, goods sent back and forth several times through the vastnesses of Russia, industries left without raw materials, goods rotting for lack of transportation. Often the mistakes are discovered only when the situation approaches disaster. Then a campaign of "self-criticism" breaks loose on orders from above; the resultant purge of scapegoats frequently disorganizes production still more.

The disproportions in planning are not accidental. Their existence is the inevitable result of the absolute rule of bureaucracy. Bureaucracy everywhere inclines to waste, duplication, superfluous paper work, the building of "office empires," and parasitism. It is not difficult to imagine the extent of these abuses where there is no public control and the bureaucrats have the power to jail and execute their critics. Occasionally, the Soviet government decides to correct some of the most flagrant excesses, and then we get glimpses of the real situation. In the spring of 1941, it was discovered that there were several hundred special executives in the various plants of Moscow factories whose only task was to hire new workers, and that every one of them hired on an average one worker a day. At the same time, it was officially stated that in the administration of the kolkhozes of the Rostov district alone, there were 50,000 officials who were, even by the standards of Soviet bureaucratic administration, completely superfluous. Many such examples were quoted in one of the campaigns of "self-criticism" at that time. And this after twenty years of official preaching against "bureaucratism" and after endless purges, which usually only replaced old bureaucrats with new ones, less skilled and more rapacious. It could not be otherwise in a system that leaves nothing to individual ini-

tative, controls every step in public and private life by party decisions, watches everybody and everything, and maintains parallel apparatuses to supervise each other.

THE costs of this bureaucratic machine are tremendous. And if we add the colossal outlays and the diversion of manpower necessary for the maintenance of the army, militia, secret police, etc., we can easily understand why the living standards of Russian workers and kolkhoz peasants are so low.

The entire mechanism of totalitarian society works to the disadvantage of the direct producers of material wealth. The position of every bureaucrat, his prestige, his advancement, his salary, his job, and often his life, depend on how he fulfills and overfulfills the plan. Owing absolute obedience to his superiors but wielding unlimited power over his subordinates, the manager tends to take the path of least resistance: he increases the exploitation of his workers. Low wages, long working hours, the speed-up are his methods. When the Soviet workers began to react by absenteeism and constantly changing their jobs, they were chained to their places of work by Draconian penal laws.

The uneconomical exploitation of labor to which the whole social system is conducive finds but its crassest expression in the slave labor camps, where millions are worked and starved to an early death. An economy in which labor is wasted and destroyed on such an immense scale, and which is burdened by such enormous unproductive expenses, remains too unproductive to sustain the accelerated tempo of investment that the bureaucracy demands. Thus Soviet society is plagued by chronic shortages of food, industrial consumption goods, raw materials, machines, skilled labor, manpower in general, and by recurrent economic convulsions.

While there were still strata of the population that were not fully integrated in the totalitarian economy, the crises could be solved at their expense: these classes would be rendered more exploitable by being reduced to the status of immediate serfs of the regime. The best example is the crisis that

preceded the collectivization of agriculture. In the early 30's, the tremendous investments in heavy industry did not provide for enough manufactured consumers' goods to give to the peasants in exchange for the food and other things they raised. Offered too little compensation for their products, the peasants "went on strike," cut their production, slowed down their deliveries of food. The answer was the liquidation of the "kulaks" and forced collectivization. At the price of untold atrocities and a famine in which millions perished, the peasants were transformed into serfs of the bureaucracy.

BY THE end of the 30's, the totalitarian society in Russia had been fully established. There were no more classes to be expropriated, all strata of the population were totally enslaved, and a further intensification of the exploitation of available resources was rapidly reaching the point of diminishing returns. But new resources are present in the countries surrounding the Soviet Union—and would be available to her if organized and exploited in the Soviet way, and under Soviet power. Measured by Russian standards, and seen in the perspective of totalitarian—not capitalist—exploitation, even Poland and Rumania appeared as "have" countries whose "liberation" and integration in the Soviet economic order would be extremely profitable to the latter. And let me point out here that those who believe that the Stalinist regime has occupied neighboring countries or added satellites to its empire for "purely strategic reasons," in order to "protect its borders" and surround itself with a buffer zone of "friendly governments," simply do not understand the workings of the Soviet system. Soviet bureaucracy extends into foreign countries for the same reason that pioneers who "mine the soil" must continually move on—the form of exploitation is so wasteful that new resources are constantly needed.

Soviet expansion thus differs radically from traditional capitalist expansion. Russia obviously does not flood her dependent countries with cheap commodities. Rather her first step is to drain the occupied country of

both industrial and agricultural goods; these are expropriated, requisitioned, or simply looted, and then shipped home. Russia usually does not export capital either—rather, she expropriates it as she expropriates goods. Here again the most primitive method of acquisition, the simple appropriation and transfer of capital goods, plays an important role at the beginning of an occupation—billions of dollars worth of industrial equipment, whole factories, whole industries have been removed from Germany and Manchuria and shipped to Russia.

But as soon as their rule in the given country has been stabilized the Soviets begin to exploit the expropriated means of production right on the spot. The forms are diverse. Some industries are put directly into Russian hands, as the uranium mines in Saxony and Bohemia. Some are controlled by mixed Soviet-satellite companies to which the satellites contribute the assets and the Russians the top management. Most are left formally in the hands of the satellite states, but operated under Russian control and supervision, and integrated in Soviet production plans. Tribute in money and commodities is exacted in the form of reparations payments, occupation costs, taxes for liberation, and even repayments—with interest—of subsidies the Soviets had originally paid to the Communist parties during the latter's struggle for power!

The satellites are required to sell their goods to the Russians at low prices and buy Russian goods in return at prices that are simply dictated; the Russians may then sell satellite products on the world market for huge profits. In 1947, Russia bought Polish coal for one dollar a ton when the world price was \$15 to \$16; and the index of Hungarian export prices to the Soviet Union was 47 per cent lower than the index of Hungary's export prices to other countries. After 1949, a curtain of secrecy descended over such transactions, but the Yugoslavs, after breaking with the Cominform, had much to tell about similar arrangements.

There is also a peculiar exchange of manpower: technicians, skilled workers, and laborers are forcibly exported to Russia; Russia

sends her newly acquired "allies" instructors, supervisors, administrators, army commanders, and police chiefs, who not only "live on the country," but enjoy privileges and exact an obedience that old-fashioned colonial administrators could hardly dream of.

THUS the Soviet ruling class has very good economic reasons for seeking to expand its rule. But it has political reasons too—and these not primarily the classical strategic ones such as govern most nations' foreign policies. Quite simply, the existence of any relatively free country, regardless of how weak or small or miserable it may be, is a threat to the rulers of the Soviet Union. Soviet theoreticians have as much as admitted the fact. On August 16, 1951, the Moscow *Bolshevik*, the theoretical organ of the Soviet Communist party, answered a question put by a number of readers: Can we still speak of capitalist encirclement when we now rule, with China and the satellites, a third of the world? The answer begins: "*Capitalist encirclement is a political term. Comrade Stalin has stated that capitalist encirclement cannot be considered a geographic notion.*"

The article proceeds to demonstrate that capitalist encirclement will last as long as there are *any* non-Soviet countries at all in the world, and that this is the reason why state power, an army, police, repression, all of which, according to Marx and Lenin, were supposed to "wither away," must be still maintained, even in the period of "complete Communism" that Russia will soon be entering. As long as one country is free, it "encircles" the Soviet world, and the dictatorship must therefore be maintained and strengthened.

This does not mean that the Soviet ruling class consciously invented the notion of "capitalist encirclement" in order to cover its predatory aims and deceive its subjects. The relation between what rulers believe and the real motives from which they act is complicated. Like many expansionists before them, Soviet bureaucrats probably believe just as sincerely in the reality of a worldwide conspiracy against them as they do in their own

"civilizing mission." They must believe this, otherwise they would have to admit and try to understand that the contradictions of Soviet society which force it to seek relief by expansion are the necessary consequences of their own despotic rule. Not only must they refuse to admit this; it is doubtful whether they can even let themselves understand it. They cannot acknowledge that economic and social realities guide and constrain them—as they guide and constrain, *mutatis mutandis*, the capitalist world too. This is inconceivable to a new ruling class which, having concentrated all economic, political, and cultural power in its hands, feels that it ought to be able to change not only social relations but nature itself, and even past history. The bureaucrats were nurtured in the belief that they had made the leap from necessity to freedom by virtue of "the Revolution" and, more importantly, by virtue of the destined role of the class they represented. They had raised—and believed—such slogans as "There are no fortresses Bolsheviks cannot storm," or "Cadres decide everything."

"Cadres decide everything"—that famous slogan of Stalin has been quoted millions of times in Soviet Russia; it means you have only to select, instruct, and organize groups of resourceful, devoted, obedient men, and you can rule any large community, solve any problem. In other words, bureaucracy—especially when chosen by history itself—is omnipotent.

Obviously, the rulers of Soviet Russia have a mentality quite different from that of most statesmen in the West—or even of previous Russian statesmen. They believe that Russia has a superior social order—but its citizens have to be protected from all contact with other social orders, even if inferior, because such contact would corrupt them. They know that Soviet doctrine is the self-evident truth—but even the mere traces of other doctrines have to be eradicated because they would confuse and mislead the people. They boast that the ruling elite is incomparable for its wisdom and virtue—but every one of the members of that elite may be a foreign spy; and as a matter of fact, in the 30's, nine-

tenths of the ruling cadres in Russia were condemned as traitors. The bureaucrat has to maintain and expand the "classless" society in which class enemies keep popping up from behind every bush, just as the greatest world power remains "encircled" so long as one free country is left. To defend the Soviet Union, the Stalinist must conquer the globe.

Expansionism is not an accidental feature of Soviet society. The czars might have felt content with the Straits; not so the present Communist regime, for which limitless expansion is a necessary product of its inner unsolved and unsolvable conflicts, economic, political, and psychological.

Two important ideological obstructions stood in the way of the development of a policy of naked Soviet expansionism: (1) the right of the self-determination of nations and (2) the belief in the complete equality of nations and national cultures—both of them hallowed fixtures in the intellectual sanctuary of Bolshevism.

The early Bolsheviks, before seizing power, asserted the right of self-determination to the point of declaring their readiness to permit any nation to secede from the Soviet Union; they did not, of course, look forward to the Balkanization of Russia, but hoped rather that the granting of the right of self-determination would lead to a voluntary union and eventually, after the inevitable world revolution, to the merging of all nations in a common, undifferentiated, socialist humanity. After Bolshevik rule was consolidated, however, the unqualified right of self-determination was given short shrift.

In October 1920, Stalin wrote that Soviet nations "had the inalienable right to secede from Russia," but that actually to do so had become "profoundly counter-revolutionary." At the tenth party congress in 1921, Stalin said that, since the various nations had joined the federation of Soviet republics "voluntarily," the right to secession "did not arise" any more. In 1923, at the twelfth party congress, he argued that "besides the right of self-determination there is also the right of

the working class to consolidate its power and to this latter right self-determination is subordinate—it cannot be an obstacle to the right of the working class to its dictatorship.”* The working class, of course, was represented by its most “conscious” representatives: the party and its Politburo.

The commitment to the equality of nations was harder to dispose of, and a certain degree of cultural freedom remained for the non-Russian minorities after the right of self-determination was interpreted out of existence. But the centralized regime of oppression and exploitation generated dissatisfaction and revolt, which in turn revived old, and created new, national tensions. Ukrainian peasants suffered famine and the atrocities of “de-kulakization” because of policies determined in Moscow. The decline in standards of living after the conquest of Georgia aroused nostalgia for independence and protests against foreign, i.e. Russian, rule. Social protest took the form of national resistance, and “nationalist deviations” spread like an epidemic. In the great purges of the 30’s, all the vice-presidents of the Soviet Union elected from the non-Russian nationalities, almost every premier of a national republic, and most Communist party secretaries in the non-Russian regions perished, and Russian Communists were placed in key positions in the “autonomous” republics.

In World War II, millions of Ukrainians, Byelo-Russians, Crimean Tartars, and Caucasian mountaineers were so desperate that they were ready to greet anyone, even Hitler, as a liberator. When the Red Army reconquered their territories several minority republics were abolished and their populations deported or exterminated. Soviet nationality policy thus ended in genocidal measures.

THESE developments finally brought about an official revision of ideology. In a famous speech on May 24, 1945, Stalin declared that the Great Russians were the “most

outstanding” nation of the Soviet Union. This sounded innocuous enough, and the apologists for Soviet policies did not fail to interpret it in terms of *primus inter pares*: all nationalities were still equal, the Great Russians were merely leading the others on the path of brotherly cooperation. But in the Soviet Union, as well as in Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, to say that all animals are equal does not exclude the possibility that some animals are more equal than others. In Communist terminology, to lead means to dictate. The leader acts “in the interest of all,” but has to be obeyed. And since, in Soviet Russia, almost any change in present attitudes automatically revises history, the leading role of the Great Russians was projected into the past.

The old czars and their generals again became objects of veneration, especially those among them, like Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great, who organized, centralized, and expanded Moscovite rule. Among the historical figures of the non-Russian Soviet nationalities, only those were considered respectable who had helped to bring their country under Russian rule, as for example, the Ukrainian Hetman Chmielnicki, whose pogroms and anti-Jewish atrocities were not allowed to dim the glory of his achievements. On the other hand, national leaders who had fought against Russia, czarist or otherwise, became “reactionary.” Books about the Kazakhstan hero, Kenesary Kasymov, were condemned because their authors “did not understand that the annexation of Kazakhstan by Russia was of profoundly progressive significance.” And when the authors of the *History of the Peoples of Uzbekistan* confined themselves to the statement that Russian conquest of Central Asia “was of progressive significance,” it was not enough. They had to “prove” that Russia saved the people from feudal decay and British imperialism.

In superimposing a Russian on a general Soviet chauvinism, the leaders of the Soviet Union, who after all come from different ethnic groups and are led by the Georgian Stalin, were certainly not motivated by any old-fashioned sentimental nationalist feelings. Almost against their will, the tensions be-

* For an excellent analysis of this transformation, see Solomon Schwarz’s *The Jews in the Soviet Union*, a study sponsored by the American Jewish Committee (Syracuse University Press, 1951).

tween national groups due to the social antagonisms generated by bureaucratic despotism led them to assert that the Russians were the empire-building, the minorities the empire-threatening, forces. It was not Russian nationalism which created Soviet imperialism. On the contrary: Soviet rule and Soviet imperialism resurrected Russian nationalism to act as a binder, because Russia was central, both in historical and geographical terms, to the complex of nations ruled from Moscow.

WE MAY sum up the evolution of Soviet imperialism by describing three quite distinct, though partly overlapping, periods in its development:

The first period, from 1917 to 1925, saw the seizure of power and the emergence of the new bureaucratic ruling class, which went hand in hand with the substitution of autocratic for democratic methods in dealing with minority peoples and small foreign nations. But the expansion of Bolshevik rule proceeded under the banner of world revolution, to which the interests of the Soviet state were in theory subordinated. The main appeal was to revolutionary internationalism, not to Russian patriotism or nationalism.

In the second period, from 1925 to 1939, the Soviet ruling class secured its totalitarian rule in Russia, avoiding open conflicts with foreign powers but transforming Communist movements everywhere into docile fifth columns. "Defend the Soviet Union!" now became the central slogan; the interests of world revolution were declared identical with—in other words, subordinated to—the defense of Soviet power. Internationalism was replaced by Soviet patriotism.

The third period started in 1939, when a favorable international situation and the consolidation of the new order in Russia made expansion possible on a large scale, and the contradictions of the Soviet system at the same time made it more and more necessary. The new central idea was that of world domination by a hierarchically organized class of rulers directed from Moscow. "Russian nationalism" was revived as an instrument of Soviet imperialism; "world revolution"

became a mere synonym for Soviet expansion.

Soviet imperialism is motivated *neither* by the interests of the "Russian nation" *nor* by the interests of "international Communism." Its driving force is *the interest of the Soviet bureaucratic regime*. For this reason, as the experiences of all the satellite countries have shown, the mere expansion of Russia's power and influence is not sufficient—its peculiar social order must be imposed everywhere, replacing previous social forms: only this can satisfy the needs of the Soviet bureaucracy. But, as the Yugoslavs know, the duplication of the Communist order is not enough: it must also be directed from Moscow.

WHAT strategic conclusions flow from this analysis?

Totalitarian imperialism cannot stop expanding. It is a menace to the free world so long as it exists. A policy of containment, therefore, has efficacy only as a prelude, the first necessary condition of a policy whose real aim must be the disintegration of the totalitarian empire. Only by containment *and* disintegration of the totalitarian machine can war be avoided. The undermining of Communist rule is possible. There is no harmony of interests between the Soviet ruling class and the Russian people: imperialist expansion does not ease the oppression weighing on the Great Russians themselves—on the contrary, they pay dearly for militarism and armament. There is a harmony of interest between the Russian people and the subjugated nations of the Russian empire. A sound policy must, in the first place, appeal to this common interest. Both the Russians and the minority nations are potential allies of Western democracy against their present oppressors. And both are entitled to the same treatment and to the same promise: that they will have the right to decide their future for themselves in a democratic way.

The social and national cleavages in the Russian empire can be the driving forces towards its disintegration. These cleavages will begin to be felt strongly when Soviet expansion is stopped; they will gather momentum when its power is rolled back.